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# Gates' name is withdrawn for CIA post

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WASHINGTON — President Reagan withdrew the nomination of Robert M. Gates for director of central intelligence yesterday after the administration concluded that prolonged Senate scrutiny of the nominee's role in the Iran-contra affair would cripple the CIA.

The withdrawal of Mr. Gates' name came after he met yesterday morning with Howard H. Baker Jr., who began work yesterday as the new White House chief of staff, and with President Reagan later in the day. Mr. Baker then announced the removal of Mr. Gates from consideration for the post.

Mr. Baker said that no replacement had yet been named, but on Capitol Hill the odds-on favorite was Bobby Ray Inman, a former deputy director of the CIA and former chief of the National Security Agency, who commands wide respect among members of the intelligence panels that oversee the CIA. An announcement of the new nominee could come today.

In announcing the removal of Mr. Gates' nomination, Mr. Baker read a statement from the president saying that Mr. Gates had asked to withdraw his name and Mr. Reagan concurred "with great regret." But the president also concluded that a likely protracted confirmation process in the Senate "would not be in the interest of the CIA or of the nation."

Mr. Baker also read a letter from Mr. Gates asking that his nomination be withdrawn because "it is apparent that there is strong sentiment in the Senate to await comple-



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## ROBERT M. GATES Nomination withdrawn

tion, at minimum, of the work of the Senate Select Committee on Iran before acting on my nomination," and such a "a prolonged period of uncertainty would be harmful to the Central Intelligence Agency, the intelligence community and potentially to our national security."

There was a strong push within the administration to end what had become a growing controversy on Capitol Hill over the nomination of Mr. Gates, who had fought to keep his candidacy alive in a series of conversations and letters to members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in recent days. But as pressure grew during the weekend for his withdrawal, Mr. Gates began telling some lawmakers that "he was considering [this] course of action," according to Sen. David Boren, D-Okla., chairman of the intelligence panel.

The president has asked Mr. Gates to remain acting director of the CIA until a new director is confirmed, and he would be welcome to remain in his previous post as deputy director of the CIA, the White House said.

"I have been impressed with the class he has shown under the enormous pressures of recent weeks," Mr. Reagan said, adding that "at any other time, I am certain that he would easily have been confirmed without delay."

That view was shared by leaders of the Senate intelligence panel, even though the committee had been sharply critical of Mr. Gates' handling of several key issues raised by the CIA's role in the Iran-contra affair.

"In many ways, Mr. Gates was a victim of circumstances," Mr. Boren said.

"The same kind of questions would have been raised if St. Peter had been working in the CIA during the past two years, and if his name had been sent up to us he would have been subjected to the same kind of prolonged questioning," Mr. Boren said.

Mr. Boren said that he and Sen. William Cohen, R-Maine, the vice-chairman of the intelligence panel, were being consulted by the administration on a new CIA nominee and that a choice could be announced today.

Sen. Sam Nunn, D-Ga., a member of the intelligence panel, commended Mr. Inman as a top choice for the CIA post and also mentioned Army Gen. William Odum, head of the National Security Agency, which has not been implicated in the Iran-contra affair; and Brent Scowcroft, the national security adviser to former President Gerald R. Ford and a member of the presidential inquiry commission that issued a sharply

critical report on the Iran-contra operation.

Foremost among questions raised about Mr. Gates involved his role in preparing the written statement presented by then-CIA Director William Casey before the intelligence panel last Nov. 21 that failed to mention a suspected diversion of funds to the contras; whether the National Security Council staff influenced the preparation of CIA intelligence data that was used to justify the Iran arms sales; and whether he had encouraged an invasion of Libya in the summer of 1985.

In a four-page letter to the intelligence panel yesterday, Mr. Gates refuted what he said were "egregious allegations." On questions about the Casey testimony, Mr. Gates said the CIA director "changed a good deal himself in the last 24 hours" before it was presented to the Senate panel.

Mr. Gates also said that the NSC "was not involved in drafting" or reviewing the Iran intelligence data prior to its completion and that was verified by agency memos. He also supplied a secret memo to the panel in which he had argued against a Libyan invasion.

Mr. Cohen and Mr. Boren said they had no objections to Mr. Gates staying on as deputy director of the CIA because there was no evidence

to disqualify him. But, given the current climate of the ongoing Iran-contra investigations, lawmakers felt that there had to be a "higher standard" for the next chief of the CIA.

Meanwhile, a spokeswoman for Georgetown University Hospital said Mr. Casey had been released from the hospital, where he had had a cancerous brain tumor removed.

The spokeswoman, Cynthia Byers, told the Associated Press that Mr. Casey was discharged Saturday, nearly 11 weeks after he was struck by brain seizures and rushed to the hospital. He had resigned last month after the surgery.